Vol. V. Numb. 8.

The EXAMINER.

From Monday December 21, to Friday December 25, 1713.

—— Procul ite, Profani. Tibullus.

THE Seaſon of the Year naturally leads me to an Examination of thoſe many Enormities and Abominations, which have infeſted the *Church*, during her late Troubles and Diſtreſſes; and from which, at leaſt from the Effects and ill Conſequences of them, ſhe is not yet entirely delivered. The Attempts that have been made upon our moſt Holy Religion in general, and upon the *Church* of *England* in particular, carry with them ſuch Marks of inveterate Hatred and induſtrious Malice, that nothing leſs than *Root and Branch* could be aim'd at. Every individual part of the Edifice, whether it were Foundation, Superſtructure, or Ornament, hath been attacked, with all the Forces both of ſecret Treachery and open Violence; no Battery hath been unemploy'd, no Artifice omitted, and no Force left untry'd, that could either ſhake or demoliſh the Building, or at leaſt render it inſecure and unhabitable. If the Aſſailants have fail'd of Succeſs, his be the Glory and the Praiſe, whoſe Promiſes are the *Rock*, upon which ſhe is built; and where the immediate Powers of Hell could not prevail, we have reaſon to hope, the Confederates of Hell never will. A compleat View of our Dangers will endear the Deliverance to us; will awaken our Vigilance and Circumſpection, and till a ſufficient Remedy can be provided againſt many Evils which we labour under, it will become us, as we are *Chriſtians*, to deprecate the Vengeance due to them, and ſecretly to lament and bewail them.

The Deſigns form'd and contriv'd againſt our common *Chriſtianity*, were brought to ſuch a Head, that we can now no more queſtion their Reality, than palliate their Guilt. *Nature*, fallen and degenerate as ſhe is, that us'd to be the only Oracle for deciding Queſtions about the Riſe and Original of Government, was kept ſilent, and not ſuffer'd to ſpeak in the Cauſe of Religion. The general Agreement of rational Creatures in the Belief of a Supream Being hath been cavil'd at, banter'd, and openly deny'd. Men have look'd for *Atheiſm*, as for hid Treaſure; have ſearch'd the *Indies* for a Rarity of that kind, and bely'd even the honeſt *Heathens*, for the ſake of augmenting the number of *Infidels*. All the *Atheiſtical Books* that had eſcap'd the Hands of Juſtice, or lay skulking in ſome remote Corner of the World, were carefully bought up, reviſ'd, tranſlated, and publiſhed in *England*, and very often with *Notes* and *Emendations* for the worſe. We can ſhew our Maſters and Teachers in the Art of *Irreligion*; Men of Figure and Parts, with a Train of Followers and Admirers; a vaſt majority of Monſters, above what the reſt of *Europe* can boaſt of, now *Effendi* & *Paninus* are no more. All the Methods of *Revelation* have been publickly Libel'd and Ridicul'd: The ſeveral parts of it, eſpecially the *Hiſtorical*, Burleſqu'd by odious parallels from the *Legends* of barbarous Nations, and the old *Pagan Theology*. *Divine Inſpiration*, *Miracles*, *Prophecy*, the *Records* of the *Church*, the Authority of the *Fathers*, and all other Proofs of the Divine Authority of the *Holy Scriptures*, or Helps neceſſary to a right apprehenſion of their Meaning, have been leſſen'd, reduc'd, and villify'd; and all the baffled Arguments of Primitive *Hereticks* and Gainſayers reviv'd on this occaſion. *Mathematicks* and *Modern Philoſophy* have been advanc'd, to confute ſupernatural Facts, and overthrow the *Hiſtory* of *Moſes*. The number of *Copies*, uncertainty of *Tranſlations*, variety of *Readings*, multitude of Objections to *ſuſpected Paſſages*, the ſeeming Inconſiſtency between ſeveral *Texts*, and all the little Cavils, which either the *Hereticks* of Old, or modern *Bigots* to *Tradition*, ever made uſe of, have been induſtriouſly collected, in oppoſition to the *Written Word*; as if they had been never heard of, or refuted before. *Faith* ſtands branded with the vile Name of *Enthuſiaſm*, and the Doctrine of a *Future State* expos'd as Fabulous, on purpoſe to deſtroy the Notion of Rewards and Puniſhments, which is the Foundation of all Religion. A new Syſtem of *Chriſtianity* has been Impudently offer'd to us, upon the weakeſt Grounds imaginable; even at a Time, when all the ſol d Reaſons and Demonſtrations of the Truth of the *Old One* have been leſſen'd and brought into Contempt. *Thinking* and *Living* by a *Rule* have been repreſented as the Contrivance of Selfiſh Prieſts, and Invaſions on the Liberties of Man-Mankind. *Blaſphemy* and *Profaneneſs* have not Lurk'd in Corners, but made a Figure in the World: have Strutted upon a *Stage*, and been eſpous'd as the faſhionable Marks of *Wit*, *Breeding*, and *Gallantry*. All *Myſteries* in general have been exploded; and the Higheſt and moſt Adorable in our Religion is now openly Aſſaulted and Struck at, under the Pretence of a clearer Explanation. *Deiſm* has taken deep Root, and in a Soil where no ſuch Weeds ſhould Flouriſh; and the Divinity of *Lucretius*, abſtracted from his Poetry, is grown into a Faſhion, eſpecially among thoſe, who carry on that Principle ſo far as Politicks, and are for making both the Supream Governor and his Vicegerents the moſt unactive limited Powers in being. *Latitudinarianiſm* and *Comprehenſion* have been formerly dealt out to us, in Schemes and Syſtems, for the Preſervation of Diſcord and Irregularity. They, who could give Proofs of their being *no Papiſts*, had a Plenary Indulgence to be any thing elſe, whatever they pleaſed. *Arrianiſm* hath been reviv'd with great Pomp and Solemnity, and is now grafted upon the Modern *Socinianiſm*, for the ſake of Forming a Sect, by a good Body of Converts. They are at preſent headed by a Perſon of great Learning and Sobriety, Grave, Preciſe, and affecting the Primitive Manner, Careleſs of his Life and Fortunes, Studious of Novelties, Tenacious of his own Opinion, Ambitious of Reforming others, a Bigot to Singularity, and Coupling all the Cunning of the *Jeſuit* with the Humility of the *Mendicant*. No Artifices are omitted to render him a Match for the higheſt Eccleſiaſtical Juriſdiction, and to Skreen him from Penance. He has his Aſſemblies and *Lectures* in ſeveral Quarters of the Town; wherein the *Creation*, *Deluge*, and *Conflagration*, are accounted for in direct Oppoſition to the *Moſaick* and *Chriſtian* Scheme; Supernatural Events are aſcribed to Chance and the Rambles of the Comets; and the *Old Teſtament* is ſet aſide out of Zeal to *Philoſophy*, as the *New* was corrupted by him, out of *Zeal* to *Antiquity*. I do not preſume to charge all theſe Errors in Religion, and Attempts againſt it, upon any other Perſons or Bodies of Men, but thoſe who are more immediately concern'd in them; and yet he muſt be very Blind indeed, who does not ſee, that there is a Party among us, who are,

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at least, so far inclined to favour the Authors and Propagators of these Principles, that they never fail to oppose every Attempt that is made towards Silencing and Suppressing them.

I make no doubt, but if the Rise of most of these Enormities were carefully Traced, it would be found, that a particular Dislike to the *Church* of *England*, perhaps on account of some Part of her *Ceremonies* and *Discipline*, or a personal Pique to the *Clergy*, was the true Cause of many, if not all of them; which is a good Reason why we ought to oppose the first Beginnings of Malice and Discord, before they grow to an incurable Head, and become too strong for the Discipline of our Indulgent Mother to cope withal. The Design against our Church was indeed well-laid, and vast Numbers were listed in the Service. I do not think there is any one Essential, or even Ceremony, belonging to Her, which has not been openly attack'd, and render'd odious to the People. The Miscarriage of this Design is almost a Proof of Her near Relation to the Deity.

The *Establishment* of the *Church* was opposed with Vigour. Sometimes it was said, that this *Establishment* was too strong, and made her a *mere Creature of the State*; whereby all *Divine Rights* were taken away; at other Times, that this *Establishment* was too weak, and that *Schismaticks* and *Hereticks* were Comprehended under it. *Occasional Conformity* was made Equivalent to constant Communion, and a just Resentment of barefaced *Hypocrisy*, called Want of Charity. *Schism* ceas'd to be a Sin, because not punish'd in this Life; and *Academies* were erected, for Entailing and Propagating an Evil, the Law only intended to Tolerate. In *Ireland*, the *Dissenting Teachers* were put upon the *Establishment*, Encouraged and Supported at the Expence of the Government, tho' many of them appear since to be *Nonjurors*. In *England*, it was a Mark of Disaffection for the State to oppose *Schism*; whilst they, who Harbour'd and Encourag'd it; had more Favour shewn them, than the most Dutiful Sons of the *Church*. Liberty to Clamour and to be Factious, was called *Liberty of Conscience*, and held Sacred here, whilst the bare Attempt of procuring a more limited Indulgence for *Episcopacy* in *Scotland*, was branded with the Name of *Popery*.

The *Orders* of our *Church* were every Day Reviled and Insulted. The Abolishing of *Episcopacy*, by Mutiny and Rabbling, met with Countenance from several great Names, and was afterwards submitted to, as a Case of fatal Necessity. Endeavours have been used to level the *Mitre* with *Presbytery* in all its *Rights*, whilst in the *Exercise* of its Jurisdiction, it proved, in many Places, an intolerable Burden to the Inferior *Clergy*. Some would have made *Ordination* little better than a *Temporal Commission*; and others labour'd to submit all *Offices* in the *Church* to the *Dernier Resort* of *Popular Elections*.

Synods and *Convocations* had almost lost their Name and Being by Disuse; so that the Laity in a little time might have look'd on them as Novelties and Usurpations. When they did meet, those very Men, who at other Times would have parted with any Ceremonies to *Schismaticks*, were now as Tenacious of Trifles, for the sake of Opposing the *Church*. When the *Supremacy* was in their Power, they play'd it against the *Divine Right*; and when they had lost that Power, they play'd the *Divine Right* they disown'd, against both *Church* and *Supremacy*.

The *Discipline* of the *Church* hath been scandalously lessen'd and misrepresented. Because it was once abus'd by *Papists*, therefore *Protestants* were set on to abolish it; and to prevent the *Ecclesiastical Courts* from *Commuting for Penance*, *Societies* of Mechanicks were erected, to make a Trade of *Reformation*. Every attempt in the Church to recover the due Exercise of those Rights, which are necessary to her very Being as a Society, and which even *Clubs* and voluntary Assemblies enjoy, was look'd on as the effect of Spiritual Pride and Ambition, and a Tendency towards introducing the Tyranny of the *Church* of *Rome*.

It has been a Custom among too many, to revile the Persons of the Clergy, affront their Order, and expose them by Ridicule and Buffoonery, without Distinction.

The decent and orderly *Ceremonies* of our *Church* have been undervalu'd, as Things indifferent, ever since their being enjoin'd by Authority. Odious Comparisons have been made between them, and the Customs of Idolatrous *Churches*. The disuses of many hath been encourag'd, and the rest threatned to be deliver'd up as a Spoil to *Schismaticks* and *Dissenters*.

The *Canons*, *Creeds*, and *Liturgy*, have been represented to the People, as *Popish* Inventions: Their Authority vigorously oppugn'd: The *History* of their Introduction vilely corrupted with a thousand Falshoods; and many Expressions contain'd in them, censur'd by the most malicious Cavils and groundless Objections.

The *Articles* and *Homilies* have been publickly charg'd with Forgery and Corruption. Adhering to them was made Criminal, and all the little Jesuitical Sophistry hath been us'd, to prove the *Clergy* absolv'd from their *Subscriptions*, at least to take off from their full Force and Validity.

The *Two Blessed Sacraments* have been most abominably Corrupted and Profan'd. *That* of *Baptism*, by an Attempt to throw it into *Lay-hands*; and *The other* by making it a *Præmium* for *Schism* and *Hipocrisy*; by the advancing of a Sacrilegious Notion, That it is no more than a *Health*, and the Impious Mockery of its Institution, by a Custom, which the present Lord Bishop of *Cork* has so well examin'd, in his late Excellent *Discourse against Drinking to the Memory of the Dead*.

The *Fasts* and *Festivals* of the *Church*, whose Institution and Uses have been so throughly vindicated and recommended to us by the worthy and learned Mr. *Nelson*, have been Burlesqu'd by a new Invention of *Mock-Holidays*, ordain'd and appointed for Riot and Mutiny. Upon one Day, the Rembrance of Queen *Elizabeth* is made the Watch-word to Rebellion; and upon another, we are taught to rejoice at the Misfortunes of a Crown'd Head, which should be hid in Oblivion.

All these Grievances, supported by Facts, and made the Subjects of many Volumes, Shock me in the Recital of them. I could almost wish we had been *Persecuted* rather than *Corrupted*. It is better to have had many *Martyrs*, than such Numbers of *Apostates* and *Enemies to Religion*.

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LONDON: Printed for *John Morphew*, near *Stationers-Hall*. 1713.